825
223 goose "yebra" (anas aegyptiaca).

Quail - "derchet" Perhaps the most common wild fowl very near habitations, but rarely hunted because very small. It is considered a nuisance and a danger because of its habit of hiding in flocks in the tall grass and starting up suddenly, scaring horses and even mules, which is dangerous especially on steep hills. [59]

411 Spears, slingshot, and now rifles are used in part-
184 time or sport hunting. Traps ("atmad") and snares are used only by occupational hunting populations living in jungles such as Wolqait and whose pattern of living differs from that of typical Amhara.

222 A noteworthy Amhara exploitative activity is the col-
412 lecting of pumice rock in riverbeds during the dry season, and thus called "yabaher dengay" (river rock). It is used
135 in grinding and husking. Gold comes mostly from south of old-Amhara territory, where it is found in sand gravels and has been sold in nuggets since ancient times.

241 D. Food Production and Consumption

a.) Agricultural production

In agriculture in general, there are two major variables: environment, and degree of sophistication - i.e. power and its application.

The ecology of Ethiopia's highland plateau, where

59. The English equivalent terms have been taken from Van Rosen, Björn: Game Animals of Ethiopia. 1953.

243 as a cereal grain in Abyssinia since ancient times. It is known in the USA as "teff lovegrass" and is sometimes grown for hay or pasture. In Abyssinia it is the most important cereal.

Tyëff seeding takes place, by broadcasting, at the beginning of the rainy season in June; it is ready for harvest in October-November. Sheep are driven over after the seeding to cover the seeds and thus insure maximum germination. Harvesting is done by hand cutting. The [412] grain is made into sheaves about 6 inches thick. Sickles made by the Falasha ironsmiths are simple affairs, a quarter-circle of toothed iron blade fitted into a wooden handle. Tyëff flour is made by the housewives, who grind it on a stone mill (wofcho) by hand on the mano-matate principle.

There are tow major kinds of sorghums (durra) grown as staple cereals, "mashella" and "zengada"; a third, "dagussa" is used more for making beer and in poor times. Many of these are sown when the early light rains come in March-April. The stalks of mashella are used to build simple temporary huts; other stalks become fodder. As [857] soon as the heavy rains are over, boys with slingshots and whips are stationed in the fields and on lookout posts atop the "umbrella tree" to fight off the birds who are very fond of sorghum, especially the "mashella".

Mashella (Andropogon sorghum) is of yellowish-white color, and the most desired of this family. The seed is much bigger than tyëff. It is often ground and mixed with it for injära-baking. Known in other parts of Africa as

576 is called "qämmash", an important etiquette. Its origin may stem from the well-known oriental pattern of protecting an important personage from being poisoned, and since the feudal lord is still imitated among the Amhara, even by peasants, the custom is still prevalent in rural areas, provincial towns, and even in Addis Ababa.

E. Utensils and Tools.

322 Whenever possible, the Amhara likes to utilize direct products of nature, such as natural shape of branches, branch forks, branches at the right angle (e.g.for adzes), gradual thickening of a branch of hardwood (e.g. for ax handles). Much time is spent in the bush looking for the right wood, for there is no carpentry on any developed level. Sawing is unknown. So is splitting of wood to prepare boards, so that laborious chopping away at a log from both sides would be necessary. Nailing and gluing is still not done in rural areas. To drill a hole in wood, the blacksmith is called and burns a hole with an iron poke. Oxhide strips are used for fastening.

442 415 Therefore there are very few wooden utensils. Spoons and forks are not used by the Amhara. During dinner, pieces of enjära are ripped from the edge, to serve as spoon and fork. Then the piece is used to fish out a morsel of meat and some of the sauce of the "wot". Iron knives are used at dinner time only at a feast of "brundo", raw beef, when a red morsel is cut off just in front of the teeth.

442 415 463 Preparations of tools and utensils fall into four categories of division of labor: (1) Work done by special-

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463 ists such as the ironsmith and tanner; (2) time-consuming work, e.g. pottery, done by women; (3) Unskilled and semi-skilled work that may require physical strength but is not time-consuming or can be done at irregular intervals, and is the prerogative of Amhara men (e.g. work in horn and wood); (4) utensils that may be made by either men or women (e.g. fiber and basket work).

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[321] Category (3) includes items of wood and horn perhaps because traditional weapons and tools, if they were not of iron, were used by men, warriors, and the low degree technical development did not require a specialist. Ornamen-
[531] tation consists of simple incisions, of rough geometric
[303] nature, in the wood. Wooden combs together with their
[412] handles are whittled out of a single piece of wood. Wooden mortars, that may be hip-high, are carved laboriously out of treetrunks by a combination of carving with adze and the use of fire. The pestle is carved, also by men,
[354] from a somewhat longer, arm-thick hardwood branch. On occasion one finds a three-legged, bowl-like stool carved by hand with adzed and knives, probably in imitation of the Galla, for the typical Amhara chair of nobles and bishops is a higher hardwood frame with a seat and back-
[407] rest of interlaced oxhide. The wooden plow, one-handed, consists of a long, stout stick ("erf"), at the bottom end of which wooden wedges ("deger") hold the plowpoint
[231] firmly in place. A lighter yoke called "jengela" is made for young and not fully grown oxen. All tools are collectively known as "eqa" (lit. baggage).

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415 horn is largely made into containers, also by men.

321 The Amhara warrior sought to have at least one very large
415 horn containing mead (cattle was sometimes bred for large horns or bought from Galla), and smaller ones for gunpowder or for the staple mixture of salt and barbare, or nug [illegible]. The narrow end is sealed with a wooden plug. In the past they were sometimes of buffalo horn, but now mostly of cow's horn. One observer noticed a striking similarity between this container and ancient Egyptian ones of smaller size, used to contain antimony for eye toilette.[65]

[71]

Perhaps this may give a clue as to why the drinking utensils made of horn look so strikingly European, amid the other Amhara containers which are more African than Middle Eastern. Nearly every Amhara peasant has at least one large drinking cup of horn; besides the usual clay cups used for coffee. The large horn cup is used by the head of the house for barley beer. Churches usually have several, especially the "tewa" used at church feasts or memorial feasts such as tazkar. An average-sized one measures about 4-1/2 inches high, has a 5 inch diameter at the top, but only 1-1/2 inche diameter at the bottom. A church which has a large working retinue of däbtära and hangers-on, acolytes, etc., often makes a practice of giving one as a courtesy gift to deserving peasants at plowing time, with the blessings of the church for a good harvest.

324 The main stone utensil that men make for the house
412 is the mano-type stone called "mäj", usually selected from a river bed and further shaped so that the bottom is flat and the rounded top fits comfortably into the palm of the housewife when she grinds the grain. She does this by a forward and backward motion, not the more advanced rotary

65. Cohen, Marcel: Glagon Abyssin en corne..., Paris 1920, pp.265-6.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

324 motion, and the rotary quern of ancient Rome and Alexandria
412 is of course entirely unknown.

251 333 Bins for storage of grain are also made by men. The two major types are the "gota", made of rings of sundried mud and straw, which are built up later inside the hut; and the "gotära" bin, made of a barrel-like skeleton of sticks, plastered with mud and left to harden in the sun. The former can, of course, be built higher, as much as 7 feet tall, while the latter is limited to the size of the door of the tuqul.

445 Gourds are widely raised as utensils, in line with the pattern of using natural products directly. Sometimes the gourds ("qel") grow on vines supported on the roof of the tuquol. When at full size, some are cut lengthwise so that each half represents a drinking cup with its own natural handle affixed. Travellers always carry these. They also carry gourds used as waterbottles ("wamära") with the top cut off and refixed to serve as a removable plug. Or, the narrowing top of a gourd is cut off and used by women while carding raw cotton on a bowstring. Artists of chiefs and feudal "great men" paint designs and scenes on gourds ("ankola") belonging to their patrons.

285 415 Basketry can be made by either men or women, often by servants and ex-slaves, but since it is not considered specialized, there is no shame attached to this work. Both coiling and weaving techniques are used, the latter more often. Noteworthy is the frequent close weaving which results in watertight containers, further secured with hot milk and fumigating with gum woods. This method,

285 Other fiberwork and basketry include: a large bas-
415 ket of withes, "qerchat", used to measure 25 kilos of pin-head-grained t'eff; a table made of split bamboo ("qerqa-ha"), or of a variety of reeds ("säbäz", "geramta", "akär-ma"); baskets to carry dry food)"akofada") made by shep-herding boys and girls; baskets to carry soggy stew, covered by morocco-type tanned leather by the faqi specialists, with straps holding the lid tight ("agälgel"); little grain baskets ("qulbit"); and the even smaller dowry basket ("mu-day") in which the bride carries her personal spinning equipment and little materials for adornment and ornament, often itself ornamented with dyed reeds; plaited straw baskets, very tightly woved and used as milking pots("qwacha")

285 There is also a purely ornamental fiber plate, en-
[531] tirely flat, with interwoven ornamentally dyed reeds, mostly in ring patterns and star designs. These are hung on the inner wall of the tuqul, probably in imitation of the interior decoration of the feudal "great man" 's house.

285 Young boys learn to make a slingshot ("wänchär")
411 of a strong fiber ("nacha"). When completed, it has a
857 loop on one end to hook over a finger. A pebble is placed in the protruding and flat center; then the slingshot is swung several times around the head and the loose end
[244] released at just the right speed and direction. It can stun a baboon and thus chase the band threatening the crops, or frighten off birds.

439 Some imported tools and utensils, have reached the
412 Amhara, but remained trade good. One was the straight razor, "arab melach", bought from Arabs as the name indicated,

perhaps replacing obsidian blades. They are now in turn being replaced by European safety razor blades even on remote rural big markets. These are called "lesa melaçh" although very commonly still sold by an Arab trader. The small glass drinking bottle called "berellē", used in place of a cup for mead, has been brought by caravans from the Middle East since the Ottoman Turkish period. The European drinking glass, "berçheqo" is still rare in rural areas.

F. Clothing

There is a substratum of wearing skins in all of Ethiopia, sheepskin particularly and even leopard skin. Among the Amhara this appears among poor wandering church students, and in the fact that certain textile articles, notably the "lämd", symbolize the leopard skin of the warrior which he still wore at the time of the accession of the present emperor. This type of clothing is in the African tradition.

But the clothing of the Amhara today is largely of cotton, plus a wool cape for the feudal "great men" or landowning farmer. Both have come to Abyssinia from the Middle East areas: the long shirt, "çämis" probably came during the 19th century, together with the white Indian jodphurs (that some trace as late as Lord Napier's campaign); the wool burnus is believed to have entered as long ago as the 5th century A.D., together with Coptic Christianity.[66]

66. Mohrer, E.F.: Beiträge zur Kenntnis der materiellen Kultur der Amhara. Bern, 1932, p. 19.

326 during the downward stroke, the compression, when the air is pressed through the built-in pipe(or a horn inserted in the neck) into the nozzle to the fire at the other end. There are two such bellows in the operation, one being extended while the other is being compressed with the other hand.

412 Agricultural tools are the major products of the smith. Sickles ("mạched") resemble European ones but are smaller and not curved as far. They are teethed somewhat roughly. In case of thick, wooden stalks such as mashella (sorghum) maize and other tall stalks, the sickle is used at the bottom, while other grains, whose stalks are more useful for thatching, etc. are cut at the top just beneath the ear. To cut branches off trees, etc., a billhock, machete-type ("gajam") hacking knife is used, which resembles an oversize sickle but has no teeth.

A big axe ("fas") is used to cut trees, but a more common, smaller hatchet, "mätrabiya", is used to cut deadwood for fuel and other uses. When this grows dull, the owner takes it to the smith who cuts it down and makes an adze of it, after seeking a properly-shaped, angle-formed wooden handle with a knoll at the elbow, to fit the iron adze-blade into. This adze is much used in digging, scraping, hoeing and harrowing the soil after seeding.

The smith also makes the sharp iron point for the digging stick used on steep slopes, especially on the "dega" upland where terrace farming is impractical, or to help break up new or long-fallow soil, using the digging stick as a lever. It is called "ankasē" or "doma". On

412 lower, muddy terrain, e.g. in the Kazaga district of the Wolkait jungle border, digging sticks are used to prepare small holes for mashella seed. But the Amhara peasant prefers to use the plow, even on contours of hills, since the use of the stick is hard labor, requiring several men working in unison. Often the stick must be weighed down with heavy rocks against the sun-baked soil in the dry season.

412 407 The scratch plow probably evolved as an elaboration of the digging stick by fixing it at an angle to a long beam pulled forward by the yoke of two oxen, thus substituting animal muscle power for human energy. Among the Amhara, the bottom tip of the plowpoint is almost always strengthened and protected by an iron plowpoint purchased from an ethnic (Falasha) smith. The sharp angle biting into the soil can be adjusted by means of a suspension binding strap of hippopotamus skin, and two small wedges. The farmer merely has to guide the digging-stick part of the plow, and encourage the oxen with his long fiber whip.

412 303 Knives for kitchen use very in length usually from 8 to 12 inches, are curved, with the cutting edge on the curved side which comes to a point. The blade is set in a wooden handle. These knives are also used for circumcision. The old razor blade usually was of similar shape, about 6 inches long, and used primarily for shaping head head hair. It is now replaced by imported European blades. Pincers, 4-5 inches long, are carried on trips to remove thorns from the bare feet. Little ear spoons are suspended from the neck-cord and used to remove earwax, especially by the ladies. [515]

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

412 ly by the ladies. An awl ("wasfe") is used in basket-making and umbrella-weaving. A small chisel ("mesar") may be a more recent introduction, but, like the awl and larger items, is nonetheless made by the (Falasha) smith. [232] Burning irons for burning out sores on the backs of mules and donkeys are also made by the ironsmith.

326 The ironsmith, usually Falasha in ethnic identification, does not usually do silversmithing. This is done in urban areas or big markets usually by Muslim silversmiths. The silver is smithed from Maria Theresa thalers, and the smith may keep as much as 2/3 of the "raw material" for himself. As in the case of most other marketable tools and utensils, the product of the silversmith is made on order only, though increasingly there are traders with chests full of silver filigree earspoons, crosses, rings, etc., ready for sale to officials, travellers, and others with ready cash. In the past, silversmiths using imported coins, and goldsmiths using Ethiopian mined gold nuggets, were to found primarily attached to the tent city of the king at his capital. Casting is done on the principle of cire perdue, a form of wax in clay.

441 Weapons were made also in connection with the feudal military organization, which required the craftsman to follow wherever the armed bands of the warlords went in raids or new settlements, serving as a kind or ordinance, and always on call. Rifles in Abyssinia date back over 300 years, handed down as family property, the stocks replaced time and again with tough, white wood, "wanza" (Cordia abyssinica). Each soldier carried gunpowder in

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754 able to turn themselves into "buda" hyenas, and of having learned their craft from the "buda" evil spirit. Since the smiths in the old-Amhara areas are mostly Falashas, whose formal religious worship is never observed by Coptic Amhara, the Falasha smith is feared and suspected of black magic. At the same time, the iron tools produced by the Falasha are much prized, not only on account of their material utility but on account of their supposed supernatural strength, endurance and "secretly revealed" workmanship. Even today, the provincial peasant will insist on obtaining his plowpoint or adze from a "real" Falasha.

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326 The Falashas practice endogamy, as do the Coptic Amhara. But in the towns where increased contact occasionally begins to attenuate the old rules, individuals of low prestige in both groups do sometimes marry, which usually results in the conversion of the Falasha partner to the majority religion. Also due to modern contact, it is beginning to happen that a Falasha teaches his craft to a non-Falasha, but the peasants often reject the output of the latter on the grounds that it isn't a "really strong, genuine Falasha article".

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281 Somewhat similar untouchability attaches to the tanners, who are usually of local pre-Amharic, (Cushitic, e.g. Agau) descent, often still speak their ancient tongues, and until recently were never converted to Coptic Christianity. As traditionally "conquered" peoples, they are not "attentam", and Amhara endogamous rules prevail against them. The stigma against them seems to